Castlemaine Naturalist

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Monthly newsletter of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

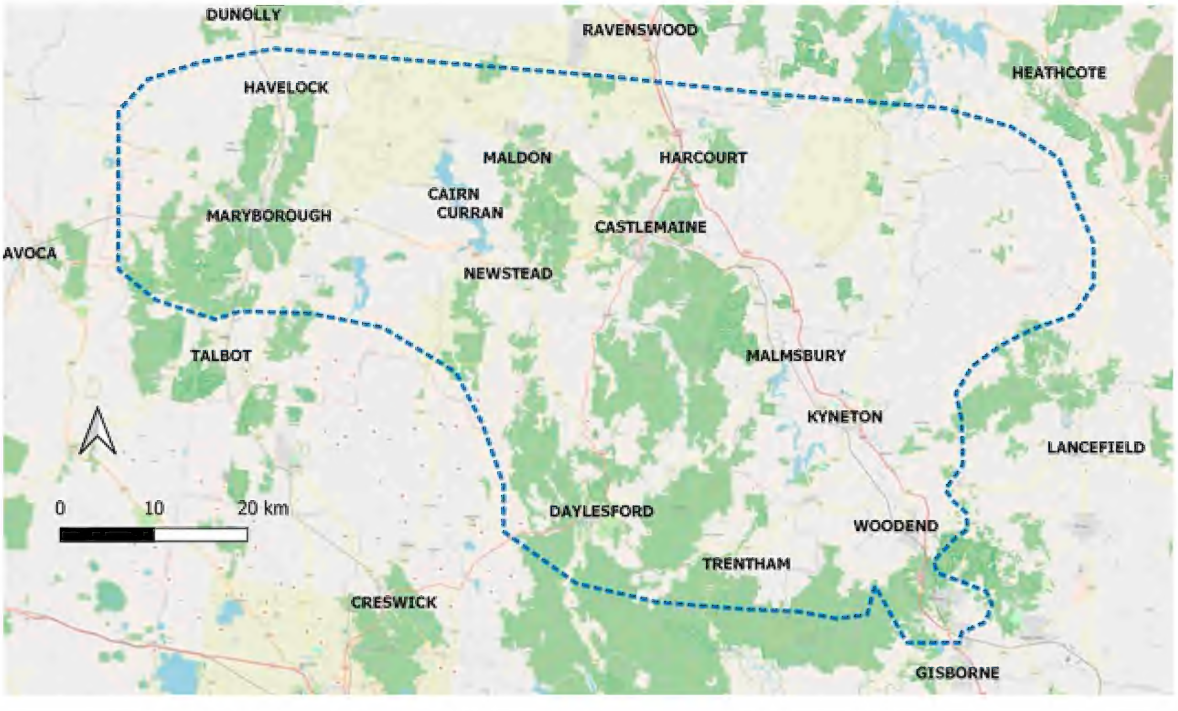
White-faced Heron, Forest Ck.
photo by Noel Young

How have birds fared in the BirdLife Castlemaine District?

By Chris Timewell

On Friday 8 October, I was honoured to be the presenter at the annual joint meeting of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club (CFNC) and the BirdLife Castlemaine branch. Although I am working at BirdLife Australia, this talk was largely based on personal research and interests.

The talk was titled "State of Box Ironbark Birds: Birds of the BirdLife Castlemaine District". For the purposes of the talk, the BirdLife Castlemaine District (BCD) is displayed in the map below – and encompasses Woodend and Daylesford in the south, not quite as far as Heathcote and Tooborac in the east, up to Harcourt North and Baringhup in the north (but not quite to Dunolly) and just beyond Maryborough in the west. Although the CFNC does not have official boundaries, most of their activities occur within the displayed subset of the broader BCD.



There are many habitat types occurring within the BCD, as well as varying geology and rainfall patterns – all of which influence bird diversity, abundance and distribution. Some of the major habitat types include woodlands and forests (e.g., box-ironbark, grassy, damp mountainous), natural and artificial waterbodies – ranging from major reservoir to small farm dams, waterways, urban parks and gardens, plantations, revegetation areas, basalt plains and agricultural landscapes with varying farming activities.

Using the Box-Ironbark forests as a case study, there is clear evidence that many bird populations that specialise in this habitat have declined or disappeared over the past 30 or so years – both within the BCD and elsewhere within similar wooded habitat across SE Australia (e.g., Grey-crowned Babblers, Bush Stone Curlew). It is almost certain that the losses commenced sooner than just the past 30 years. However, from the 1980s and earlier, the data that we have about local birds becomes less scientifically robust and also harder to find. As such, we have a significantly incomplete knowledge of birds in the BCD from before 1980, which makes it very difficult to accurately and confidently quantify the full extent of change since European colonisation.

The presentation summarised some of the approaches that can be used to reconstruct bird communities in the BCD from periods prior to the 1980s – whether this be in 1940, 1900 or even back to the time of European colonisation – e.g., during Major Mitchell's first expedition through the district in the early 1830s. This includes undertaking a review of museum specimens, old diaries, scientific studies and other published reports, field naturalist newsletters, the online 'Trove' database of old newsletters, plus other information sources.

In addition to the declining species, there are also birds (both native and introduced) that have increased or are new arrivals to the BCD since European colonisation, including the Galah and Crested Pigeon. This is an ongoing process, with new residents and regular visitors to the BCD in the past 10 years including Blue-faced Honeyeater, Grey Butcherbird, Eastern Koel and Rainbow Lorikeet. There are also some uncertainties – for example, the first documented Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo record for greater Castlemaine was in 1988, but maybe this species was naturally occurring in the area at the time of European colonisation when Banksias and She-oaks would have been significantly more prevalent.

There is much still to be learnt about the bird communities occurring in the BCD at the time of European colonisation, and how these communities have changed in the subsequent years and decades through to the present day – which also has implications for how local bird communities may be managed and conserved into the future. This is a large undertaking, and I would welcome interest from others that would like to contribute to this research project.

The presentation concluded with an overview of a soon-to-be-published annotated checklist of the birds of the BCD – with a focus on the species documented during

the calendar year of 2018. This year was chosen as it was when the BirdLife Castlemaine branch was launched. Compiled from more than 1500 available surveys, this checklist document provides detailed descriptions on the location, timing, abundance and breeding activity of the 225 bird species detected within the BCD in 2018. The document, which is to be widely available in the near future, is a testament to the incredible volunteer contributions to monitoring projects and similar bird-watching activities in the BCD.

Previously a rare visitor, the Black Kite is increasingly abundant and widespread in the greater Castlemaine district.
Photo: Kerrie Jennings

Did the New Holland Honeyeater occur in the Castlemaine district at the time of European colonisation?
Photo: Noel Young

Wildlife Queries November (1943)

George Broadway

In November 1943 there were not many notes and specimens from readers. I wonder whether readers were out looking at the spring wild flowers rather than observing insects and birds.

There was a big article on plant galls illustrated with many photographs, all in B & W of course. On the childrens' page there was another Hiawatha competition with a prize or prizes. First prize was five shillings, to be paid in War Savings Stamps. For those of you too young to remember (most of you), during World War II children were encouraged to assist the war effort by spending their pocket money (if they had any), by purchasing War Savings Stamps which could be swapped for a War Savings Certificate when you had enough. This was a loan and could be redeemed after the war. Children were encouraged to join the "War Savings Army" and were promoted to higher ranks according to the number of certificates they held.

We also got a certificate signed by General Thomas Blamey. I seem to remember having a badge with three pips which meant I had risen to the rank of captain.

Anyway back to Hiawatha. I also remember our teacher in grade 4 or 5 reading to us the Hiawatha poems by H. Longfellow. My wife has a few plants of a variety of Hardenbergia called Minnie-ha-ha which always makes me think of Hiawatha:

SLALG that grow upon the gumtrees
Fascinate young Hiawatha
PELPA SLALG and SLALG. Like SLOMSOBS
SLALG that look like TROFCAY HEMINCS
All the work of tiny SCETSIN
There they grow upon the gumtrees

Where the RATLOI DRIB. Is nesting,
And the dainty LOYLEW NIRBO
Sings at dawn his hymn of welcome
Where the ugly WYLFAS. Babies
(STRIPPIES is the name they call them)
Hang in bunches on the branches
PHERTIC PSNALT from western marshes
SHALLTIN from the hot dry inland
YEENHETORAS in the woodlands
All give joy to Hiawatha

Sorry there is no 5 shilling prize this time.

So to the few observations, most of which have been noted previously.

INSECTS

Oakleigh: Caterpillar of the Mottled Cup Moth, called Chinese Junk because of its oriental shape and colouring. The little spines on the back can cause a painful rash - antidote weak ammonia or a paste of sodium carbonate. (Washing Soda)

Castlemaine: Miss K Hughes. An unusually fine and symmetrical egg-case of the larger Praying Mantis which feeds on flies, bees and other insects. The larger Mantis has its eggs in a light, frothy biscuit - coloured oval mass faintly striated and more than 25 mm long.

Upwey: Wingless stick insect, not uncommon but rarely seen because of the remarkable resemblance in colour and form to a few sticks of the shrub on which it rests and feeds and its wonderful power of remaining motionless to escape observation. These insects are also known as Phasmas and Spectres and are found all over Australia. See June '16

Yackandandah: Caterpillar of the Vine Hawk Moth. See Feb '18

Springvale: Cigar-shaped dwelling, camouflaged and armoured with sticks of the Saunders Case Moth, Meturus elongatus, home for the larva for its entire life. See June '17

Warradale S.A. Insect galls on leaves, too old cracked and deserted to identify. The insects hatch and feed in them till they emerge as adults.

Gardenvale: Young of the Green Vegetable Bug, a garden pest. See Dec '16

SPIDERS

Torquay: You were correct - it was a Bird-dropping or Orchard Spider. Best to leave it on the tree to continue eating harmful insects . See May '17

St Kilda: Not rare but not often seen because of the effective camouflage - it folds its legs up tightly and appears to be a piece of bird dropping, i.e. another of the same.

GENERAL

Wandin: A little creature not seen so frequently now as previously, the Yellow-footed Pouched Mouse. (Better known these days as *Antechinus flavipes*). A

fierce little fighter, its food consists mostly of insects and worms with birds eggs and young in season.

Melbourne: Johnny Hairylegs or House Centipede, official name is Scutigera.

Although a centipede it is harmless but spends its limited venom on its prey such as Silverfish. Therefore its presence in the home is to be encouraged. See Jan '17

Ouyen: The "snake" with tiny legs was a Two-toed Skink, a species of Hemiergis. All lizards of that genus have the number of toes more or less reduced, and the legs are small and weakly developed so that they look like small snakes. In spite of their appearance they are harmless

Sorrento: Found on the beach at Rosebud, Ibacus, the Prawn Killer. A Crustacean allied to Crabs and crayfish but built very flat to lie on the sea-bottom where it feeds on shrimps and other small crustacea. Not often seen because of its camouflage. See Aug '19

A Wednesday Wander around Kaweka Wildflower Reserve

Peter Turner

We almost cancelled the WWW for 29th September with 20-30 mm rain forecast for the day. But the rain fell elsewhere so 7 members and 3 visitors gathered at the entry to Kaweka, where George Broadway outlined the history of this precious patch of bush in North Castlemaine, saved from development by community pressure on Council, and managed by the Friends of Kaweka since 1967.

George led us around the paths noting the many plants in flower at present. Highlights included Sticky Boronia, Goldfields Grevillea, Leopard Orchids and Rough, Snowy and Round-leaf Mint-bush – see George's list of plants in flower below. Kaweka was at its best, so we were fortunate that the rain held off. Well worth a visit if you have not been there recently.

Acacia acinacea	Gold-dust Wattle	*Glossodia major*	Wax-lip Orchid
A. aspera	Rough Wattle	*Goodenia blackiana*	Primrose Goodenia
A. dealbata	Silver Wattle	*Grevillea alpina*	Downy Grevillea
A. decurrens	Early Black Wattle	*Grevillea dryophylla*	Goldfields Grevillea
A. euthycarpa	Wallowa	*Grevillea rosmarinifolia*	Rosemary Grevillea
A. fimbriata	Fringed Wattle	*Hardenbergia violacea*	Purple Coral-pea
A. floribunda	White Sallow Wattle	*Indigofera australis*	Austral Indigo
A. paradoxa	Hedge Wattle	*Micromyrtus ciliata*	Heath Myrtle
A. pravissima	Ovens River Wattle	*Olearia phlogopappa*	Dusty Daisy-bush
A. prominens	Golden Rain Wattle	*Olearia teretifolia*	Cypress Daisy-bush
A. pycnantha	Golden Wattle	*Ozothamnus obcordatus*	Grey Everlasting
A. verniciflua	Varnish Wattle	*Philotheca myoporoides*	Long-leaf Waxflower
Arthropodium strictum	Chocolate Lily	*Philotheca verricosa*	Fairy Waxflower
Brachiscome multifida	Cut-leaf Daisy	*Pimelea linifolia*	Slender Riceflower
Bursaria spinosa	Sweet Bursaria	*Platylobium montanum*	Hill Flatpea
Caladenia carnea	Pink Fingers	*Prostanthera denticulata*	Rough Mint-bush
Craspedia variabilis	Billy Buttons	*Prostanthera nivea*	Snowy Mint-Bush
Cyanothamnus anemonifolius*	Sticky Boronia	*Prostanthera rotundifolia*	Round-leaf Mint-bush
Daviesia leptophylla	Narrow-leaf Bitter Pea	*Rhytidosporum procumbens*	White Marianth
Daviesia ulicifolia	Gorse Bitter Pea	*Tetratheca ciliata*	Pink Bells
Derwentia perfoliate	Diggers Speedwell	*Westringia crassifolia*	Whipstick Westringia
Dianella admixta	Black-anther Flax-lily		
Diuris pardina	Leopard Orchid	*genus recently changed	from Boronia - Ed

Photo Observations

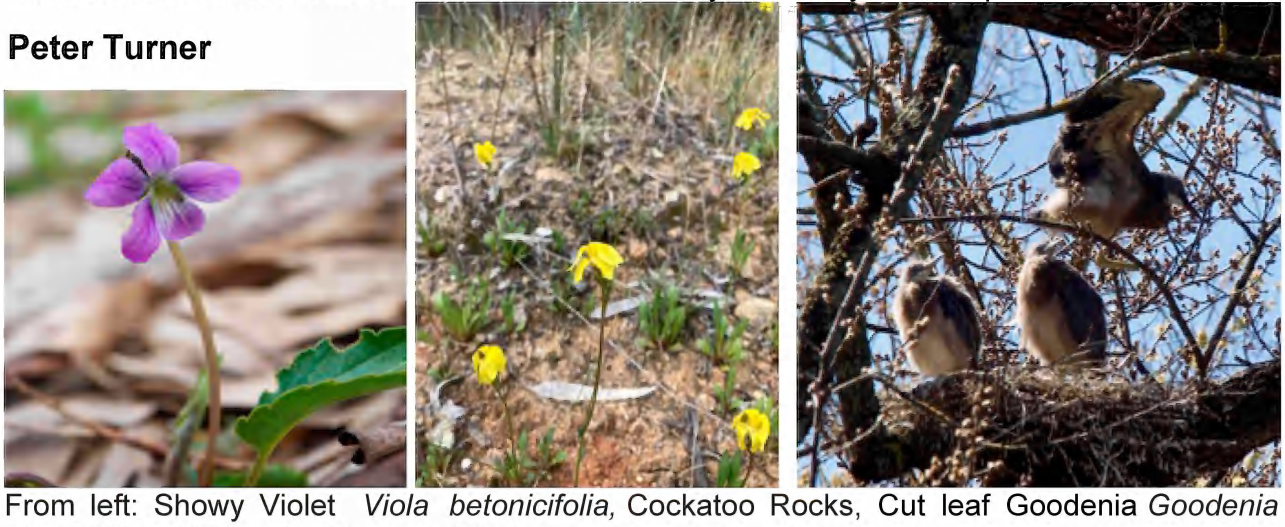
Noel Young With the cold weather extending into spring we have witnessed a late but prolific wildflower display, among the best I have seen. While participating in the late October bioblitz, there was plenty in flower though slightly past a peak. It is hard to pick a handful of candidates from the hundreds of photos in October.

Photo Observations

Phil and Judy Hopley

Clockwise from left:– *Indigofera australis* on Mt Alexander, Brown-clubbed Spider-orchid, Crimson Sun-orchids *T macmillanii* Muckleford, Rosy Heath-myrtle - Loop track off Wewak tk.

Peter Turner



From left: Showy Violet *Viola betonicifolia,* Cockatoo Rocks, Cut leaf Goodenia *Goodenia pinnatifida;* Heron chicks on nest, Lake Joanna.

Jill Williams

Guinea-flower *Hibbertia* sp. Flower and leaves; and a psyllid – yet to be identified.

What's in a name?

Cathrine Harboe-Ree

In our September monthly meeting I mentioned the name query about *Diuris pardina*, our Leopard Orchid, and this was raised in the October 'Castlemaine Naturalist' as well. As a result of recent research, including DNA testing, there have been many name changes, as well as species re-attributions of orchids. According to the orchid authority Gary Backhouse, it now appears that the true *Diuris pardina* is endemic to the Mt Lofty Range region in South Australia, and that all of the orchids in Victoria that have previously been called *Diuris pardina* should perhaps be called *Diuris curvifolia*.

Gary says that *Diuris curvifolia* was described from Tasmania in 1840 and has long been considered a synonym of *Diuris pardina*. However, it has been resurrected to apply to plants across the bulk of the range of the 'old' *Diuris pardina*, including in Victoria. The main distinguishing feature of *Diuris curvifolia* seems to be the longer and narrower, almost oblong, labellum side lobes. This feature seems to be fairly consistent across its range in Victoria, which includes north-eastern and central Vic., from near the coast to well into the mountains and inland plains. It is not certain just how far west *Diuris curvifolia* extends, possibly to Stawell.

Then there is *Diuris leopardina,* which was described in 2017. It occurs in western Victoria, where it seems to be fairly widespread and often locally common. It differs from *Diuris curvifolia* by its slightly later flowering period and its usually yellower flowers with shorter lateral sepals. The labellum side lobes of *Diuris leopardina* are more or less oblong like *Diuris curvifolia*, but often curve backwards a little, whereas in *Diuris curvifolia* the side lobes are usually flat or sometimes curve a little forward.

To complicate things further, Gary says that there is a case to consider the blotched *Diuris* from Eastern Victoria to be 'true' *Diuris maculata*, and one other species in the *Diuris maculata* complex, *Diuris semilunulata*, is said to occur in Victoria, in mountains in the north-east around Corryong. This species has moderately large flowers with broadish labellum side lobes that are broader than in *curvifolia* but not quite semicircular as in *maculata*.

Gary concludes by saying: "Take your pick of naming options. There is either one widespread and variable species in Victoria, in which case the name *Diuris maculata* applies, as this species almost certainly does occur in Victoria. Or, you can tie yourself in knots applying the names *Diuris curvifolia*, *leopardina*, *maculata* and *semilunulata* to your photo collections!"

Flora of Victoria is generally recognised as the authority on plant names. To date it does not recognise *Diuris curvifolia*, *leopardina or semilunulata*, and *maculata* is referred to as *pardina,* so we need to wait before renaming our local orchid.

And a correction, in keeping with the theme of orchid name changes: I mis-labelled a photo of *Cyanicula caerulea* as *Caladenia caerulea* in the October newsletter. This orchid was named *Caladenia caerulea* in 1810 and carried this name until it was changed in 2000 to *Cyanicula caerulea*. It was changed back to its original name in 2015, but Flora of Victoria currently has it as *Cyanicula caerulea*!

Birds of Sutton Grange October 2021

Nigel Harland

Superb Fairywren	Red-browed Finch	White-browed Scrubwren
Australian Magpie	Australian Raven	Laughing Kookaburra
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Long-billed Corella
Crimson Rosella	New Holland Honeyeater	Welcome Swallow
Common Bronzewing	Red Wattlebird	Galah
Striated Pardalote	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Shrike-thrush
Eurasian Blackbird	Grey Currawong	White Faced Heron
Black-faced Cuckooshrike	Fantailed Cuckoo	Olive-backed Oriole
Eastern Rosella	Boobook Owl	Straw-necked Ibis
Pied Currawong	Yellow Thornbill	

Was out early one morning to see just seven Straw-necked Ibis flying over.

Red-browed Finches still around in good numbers.

Just one Pied Currawong close to the house.

Yellow Thornbills are very rare visitors, two birds seen on a morning walk.

Challenge Bird Count for 2021

Chris Timewell

For 20 or so years, the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club has participated in the Challenge Bird Count. On a single calendar day sometime around the first weekend in December, groups from across Australia aim to detect as many bird species as possible within a 25km radius of a designated central point. For the Castlemaine area, the Market Building is considered to be our central point – with 6 or so groups exploring different parts of the area.

The national event is effectively run by two volunteers, under the auspices and oversight of BirdLife Australia. For the past 5 years or so, I have coordinated the local teams as a representative of the CFNC.

In 2020, the event was cancelled nationwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated restrictions and risks.

For the 2021 event, BirdLife Australia have unfortunately decided that the need to take the same approach. From their public statement: *"...we won't be able to provide centralised coordination or insurance for a BirdLife Twitchathon or Challenge Bird Count in 2021."* and *"Similar to last year, we advise state-based*

organisations and teams that they are able to run their own Twitchathon or Twitchathon-styled event at their own risk."

As such, the Castlemaine-based efforts for the Challenge Bird Count are, sadly, once again cancelled for 2021.

However, keen birdwatchers may still wish to undertake their own Big Day of Birding as a personal non-affiliated challenge. That is, within the rules and restrictions relating to COVID-19 at the time, individuals, pairs or small groups of naturalists may decide to explore the district sometime between now and Christmas – with the aim of seeing as many birds as possible within a single calendar day.
If you do decide to have a go, I would encourage you to (a) lodge your site-by-site and incidental bird observation in **Birdata** and (b) put together a summary report of your day for the Castlemaine Naturalist newsletter.

Hopefully the full event will be back in 2022.

The complete statement from BirdLife Australia can be read here - https://www.networkbirdlife.org/home/2021-twitchathon-and-challenge-bird-count-update

CASTLEMAINE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB
Excursion - Saturday 20 November, 1.30 pm,

"Kalimna Park - prescribed burn impacts"

Leader: Karl Just

Join Karl for a walk around areas of Kalimna Park that were subjected to prescribed burns in the Autumn of 2020 and discuss the impacts of the burns. This is a very important topic for our community and it will help members appreciate the complexity of this vexed issue. Karl will discuss the fuel mapping that he did and how that showed very little change to the risk rating before and after the burn. The CFNC are planning to work with Karl on regular fuel load assessment surveys. Karl will also point out the damaging effects of the containment lines that were put in.

On the positive side of more nuanced burning approaches, he will show us parts of the southern section that responded quite nicely when burnt at low intensity. A chance to talk about the potential benefits of cultural burning, which has been flagged for Kalimna.

Meet: 1.30pm at the Octopus, Duke St, opposite the Castle Motel, Castlemaine

Bring: Sunhat, block-out, water and wear stout walking shoes (there will be some walking over uneven ground). Also bring your own afternoon tea and chairs for the end of the excursion.

Please comply with Government COVID-safe requirements on the day.

The Field Trip will be cancelled in extreme weather conditions.

CASTLEMAINE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Monthly Meeting - Friday 12 November, 7.30pm, by Zoom

Guest speaker:

Phil Ingamells, Victorian National Parks Association

"Managing fire tomorrow"

Fire is one of the most difficult and contentious management problems in the state, for both biodiversity and public safety reasons. We have many options in our toolbox, from high tech solutions to traditional Indigenous burns. Arriving at the best mix of management actions isn't easy, especially if decisions are swayed by other objectives. The fuel that might kill us in extreme weather is also our surviving natural heritage. It should, at least, be treated with respect.

This talk will look at some questionable public perceptions of fire management, and raise options that might be useful in the future.

Radar Hill burn April 2019 – Photo by Lisa Roberts

The meeting will be held by Zoom and all are welcome. If you have not joined earlier CFNC webinars and wish to attend, please email Peter Turner at munrodsl@iinet.net.au

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club

COMING EVENTS

Monthly meetings will continue to be held on-line via ZOOM until further notice, commencing at 7.30pm. If you have registered for our previous webinar meetings you will be sent the link for registering with Zoom. If you have not joined before and wish to attend, please email Peter Turner at munrodsl@iinet.net.au

Our guest speaker will follow the usual 'observations' session when members can share recent interesting sightings with an option to show a photo or two. If you have photos to be shown please email JPEG file(s) to Euan Moore at calamanthus5@bigpond.com by Noon on the day of the meeting.

Excursions will be held this year (subject to COVID restrictions) on the Saturday after the monthly meeting. Meet at the Octopus (opposite the motel in Duke St) for departure at 1.30pm unless otherwise advised.

Fri Nov 12 Meeting: Speaker - Phil Ingamells (VNPA) 'Fire and biodiversity'
See page 11 for details

Sat Nov 20 Excursion: 'Kalimna Park – prescribed burn impacts' with Karl Just
See page 10 for details

Fri Dec 10 Meeting: members night

A chance for you to share your interesting nature sightings and stories from the year. This meeting will be held by zoom, so you can show photos, a video or a short power-point presentation. Contact Euan Moore if you have any queries about how to show your presentation: calamanthus5@bigpond.com

Business meetings - third Thursday of each month.

Club website (Web master: Ron Wescott) - http://castlemainefnc.wordpress.com/

Castlemaine Naturalist - email newsletter material to: newsletter.cfnc@gmail.com

*Deadline for the December edition is November 26.

Subscriptions for 2021
Ordinary membership: Single $35, Family $50
Pensioner or student: Single $25, Family $30
Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

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